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Making high-grade hay



More feed needed now

High-grade, or high-quality, hay is always needed in liberal supply for efficient production of livestock. This need is especially urgent during wartime when all types of feed, particularly protein concentrates, are short.

More feed through high-grade hay

By putting up all our hay as U. S. No. 1 we can increase the feeding value of the hay crop by 20 per cent. Legume hays of U. S. No. 1 grade are leafy and green and contain only a small amount of foreign matter. In the grass hays leafiness is not a grade factor.

CUT HAY EARLY



Advantages of high-grade hay

Farmers grow high-grade hay every year, but because of faulty harvesting methods many do not make high-grade hay.

More palatable

Animals will eat more of the palatable, high-grade hay. By getting a larger share of their nutrients from hay they will need less from other kinds of feed.

Higher feeding value

Three tons of U. S. No. 1 hay has as much actual feeding value as 4 tons of U. S. No. 3 hay. An acre

of alfalfa yielding 3 tons of U. S. No. 1 hay will yield 960 pounds of protein that is more digestible than that in any other grade. As U. S. No. 2 the hay will yield 840 pounds of protein and as U. S. No. 3 it will yield 720 pounds.

Higher vitamin content

High-grade hay has a higher vitamin content than low-grade hay. Cows that don't get enough vitamin A drop their calves before their time. These calves are often born blind or dead. In contrast, cows fed a diet high in vitamin A usually deliver healthy calves at the proper time. And these cows give milk that is high in vitamin A.

Costs no more

It doesn't cost any more to make the crop from a field into high-grade hay than it does to make it into low-grade hay. It doesn't take any additional machinery and it doesn't take any more labor or time.

A pound of digestible protein in high-grade, home-grown hay costs at least a third less than a similar quantity bought in any other form. Present prospects are that farmers will not be able to buy all the concentrates they want.

Transportation saved

We are short of both railway and truck transportation. We need to make what we have go as far as we can. Producing high-grade hay at home will help to save transportation.

How to produce high-grade hay

Cut early

Early cut alfalfa has 18 percent protein; late cut has 15 percent. Early cut red clover is practically equal to alfalfa in protein content.

KEEP GREEN COLOR



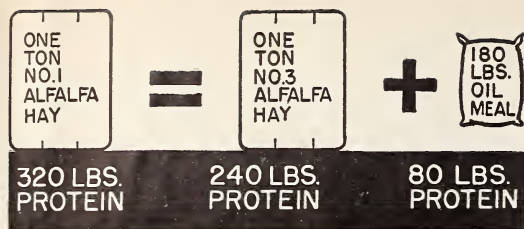
Cut alfalfa when from one-tenth to one-fourth in bloom. When it blooms sparingly, cut before the lower leaves begin to turn yellow and fall. The first crop may be cut in the late bud stage without injuring the stand. In some places it may be necessary to cut alfalfa at a different stage of growth in order to control leafhoppers.

Cut red clover and alsike at the half-bloom stage.

Cut annual lespedeza when it is in full bloom and sericea lespedeza when it is from 10 to 12 inches high.

Cut soybeans when the beans are half to three-quarters developed or before; cowpeas when the first pods begin to ripen and turn yellow.

Cut timothy when it is in full bloom or before and Johnson grass when the heads are just coming out of the boot; other grasses, such as redtop and orchard grass, not later than full bloom. When cut at an early stage, these grasses are more palatable and nutritious and sometimes will make more than one cutting.



Handle on time

Cut only the amount of hay that can be handled on time. Hay that lies in the swath or windrow too long loses its leaves and color. What should have been high-grade hay thus becomes low-grade.

Save the leaves

The leaves contain 75 percent of the protein in legume hays.

When the hay is well wilted and before the leaves are lost, turn it into small windrows, preferably with a side-delivery rake. Complete the curing in the windrow. Partly cured hay in windrows should be turned only when it is tough enough that the leaves will not shatter. Turning can be done with the side-delivery rake.

Keep color green and prevent mold

The more green color in the hay the more vitamin A it contains. Cure the hay in the windrow or cock so that the sun and dew can't bleach it. Save color and prevent mold by putting the hay in the stack or a well-ventilated mow when dry enough to avoid excessive heating, that is, when a wisp of the hay is slightly brittle and shows no moisture when twisted tightly or when the outer skin of alfalfa or clover stems cannot be peeled off with the thumbnail. With soybeans or cowpeas, store when the seeds are cured. Scatter the hay well in the mow—stack bales on edge with the wires on the sides showing. These practices will help air out the hay as it goes through the sweat and will prevent it from heating too much.

Bale hay from the stack or mow after it has gone through the sweat. Do not bale legume hay during cold, windy weather.

In the eastern United States farmers have difficulty in baling hay from the windrow. Either it isn't well-cured and molds in the bale or it is so dry the leaves shatter. The difficulty is to find the time when the hay is just right; not moist enough to mold—not dry enough to lose its leaves. After baling from the windrow stand the bales on end in the fields.

If it rains!

If the weather is bad for curing hay you may be able to put up the crop as grass silage. See United States Department of Agriculture Leaflet No. 238, Making Grass Silage by the Wilting Method.



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